

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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McGarvey 202/343-5634

GRIZZLY BEAR CRITICAL HABITAT PROPOSED

Approximately 20,000 square miles in Idaho, Washington, Montana, and Wyoming have been proposed for listing as critical habitat for the grizzly bear, a threatened species, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced recently in the Federal Register.

Public comments addressed to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240, are invited through February 9, 1977.

The November 5, 1976, Federal Register notice of these hearings was in error. The correct dates of the public hearings are as listed below:

<u>Date and Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Dec. 8, 1976 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Cody, Wyoming Municipal Auditorium	John Davis U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service P.O. Box 25486 Denver Federal Center Denver, Colorado 80225 Phone: 303/234-4600
Dec. 10, 1976 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Missoula, Montana University Center Ballroom, University of Montana	(Same as above.)
Dec. 14, 1976 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.	St. Anthony, Idaho South Freemont High School Auditorium	Philip A. Lehenbauer U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service P.O. Box 3737 Portland, Oregon 97208 Phone: 503/429-4041
Dec. 17, 1976 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.	Washington, D.C. Department of the Interior, South Auditorium	Robert Jacobsen Office of Endangered Species U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Washington, D.C. 20240 Phone: 202/343-5687

(over)

The Service is proposing that the areas delineated below be determined as critical habitat. These areas actually merge to form four zones of about 13 million acres which are located in:

(1) The region where Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho come together, in Yellowstone National Park and adjacent areas, including parts of Custer, Shoshone, Teton, Targhee, Beaverhead, and Gallatin National Forests, and part of Grand Teton National Park.

(2) Northwestern Montana, in Glacier National Park, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area, most of the Flathead National Forest, and adjacent areas, including parts of the Lewis and Clark, Helena, and Lolo National Forests, and small parts of the Blackfeet and Flathead Indian Reservations;

(3) Extreme northwestern Montana and northern Idaho, in the Cabinet Mountains, mostly in the Kootanai, Kaniksu, and Lolo National Forests; and

(4) Extreme northern Idaho and northeastern Washington, mostly in the Kaniksu National Forest.

These areas coincide approximately with the present regular distribution of the grizzly bear in the 48 conterminous States, and are the only remnants of the original range of the species which once covered a region approximately 50 times as great, from Canada to Mexico, and from the Great Plains to the Pacific. These areas contain the only significant grizzly populations south of Canada, and, insofar as is known, provide all biological, physical, and behavioral requirements of those populations. Among the important characteristics of these areas is their relative inaccessibility and lack of the kinds of human developments and activities that tend to result in conflicts between the bears and man. This degree of isolation and freedom from excessive human presence seems critical to the survival of the grizzly. It is true that there are many natural or man-made sites scattered over these areas that are seldom or never utilized by the grizzly bear. It would not be possible, however, to attempt to identify all of these sites and exclude them from the overall designation, the Service said.

There has been widespread and erroneous belief that a critical habitat designation is something akin to establishment of a wilderness area or wildlife refuge, and automatically closes an area to most human uses. Actually, a critical habitat designation applies only to Federal agencies. It is essentially an official notification to the agencies that the Endangered Species Act requires them to insure that their activities in a critical habitat area do not jeopardize endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or modification of the habitat.

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